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UNCLAS COLOMBO 000961

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [MASS](#) [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PTER](#) [CE](#) [LTTE](#)

SUBJECT: COUNTRY TEAM ASSESSMENT FOR AIR DEFENSE RADARS

REF: GOVERNMENT OF SRI LANKA REQUEST FOR DIRECT

COMMERCIAL PURCHASE OF AIR DEFENSE RADARS

11. THE GOVERNMENT OF SRI LANKA HAS REQUESTED THROUGH A US COMPANY PRICE AND AVAILABILITY OF A COMPLETE SYSTEM SALE FOR AN UNSPECIFIED NUMBER OF AIR DEFENSE RADARS. LIKELY RADARS MENTIONED ARE THE SENTINEL OR ANTPQ36A. A SYSTEM SALE WOULD INCLUDE ASSOCIATED SUPPORT EQUIPMENT, TRAINING, SPARES AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE.

12. EMBASSY COLOMBO STRONGLY SUPPORTS THIS SALE AND IN ACCORDANCE WITH SECTION 70003 OF THE SAMM, THE FOLLOWING INFORMATION IS SUBMITTED:

1A. SRI LANKA REQUIRES AIR DEFENSE RADARS TO DEFEND ITS SOVEREIGN AIRSPACE FROM AIR ATTACKS, INCLUDING SUICIDE ATTACKS FROM LIBERATION TIGERS OF TAMIL EELAM (LTTE) AIRCRAFT. AS THE EVENTS OF 11 SEPTEMBER, 2001 CLEARLY DEMONSTRATED, A SINGLE AIRCRAFT CAN BE A DEVASTATING WEAPON IN THE HANDS OF A DETERMINED SUICIDE BOMBER. RECENT INFORMATION IN THE OPEN MEDIA INDICATES THAT THE LTTE IS NOW IN POSSESSION OF ORGANIC AIRCRAFT, AN ALL WEATHER AIRFIELD AND, POSSIBLY, TRAINED PILOTS. SRI LANKA HAS NO INTEGRATED AIR DEFENSE SYSTEM AND APART FROM THE CIVIL SURVEILLANCE RADARS AT THE INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT, LACKS ANY CAPABILITY TO DETECT INCOMING AIRCRAFT. AIR DEFENSE RADARS WOULD GIVE THE SRI LANKA AIR FORCE THE BASIC ACQUISITION CAPABILITY INHERENT TO AIR DEFENSE SYSTEMS THE WORLD OVER AND WOULD PROVIDE A DETERRENT TO LTTE ATTEMPTS TO FLY INTO A POLITICAL OR ECONOMIC TARGET IN THE SOUTH OF SRI LANKA.

1B. WHILE NO AIR DEFENSE RADARS ARE CURRENTLY IN THE SLAF INVENTORY, COMPATIBLE VERSIONS OF COUNTERFIRE RADAR ARE PRESENT IN THE SRI LANKA ARMY. AIR DEFENSE RADARS WOULD ADD A NEW, BUT COMPLETELY DEFENSIVE CAPABILITY TO SRI LANKAN MILITARY, GIVING THE SLAF THE TECHNICAL ABILITY TO DEFEND AGAINST THE AIR WING OF THIS FOREIGN TERRORIST ORGANIZATION.

1C. IT IS ANTICIPATED THAT SRI LANKA'S NEIGHBORS WILL HAVE NO SIGNIFICANT OR NEGATIVE REACTION TO THIS SALE. INDIA HAS ASSISTED SRI LANKA AGAINST THE LTTE IN A NUMBER OF WAYS, NOT THE LEAST OF WHICH HAS BEEN MARITIME INTERDICTION. THE INTRODUCTION OF A DEFENSIVE RADAR SYSTEM THAT MIGHT REDUCE INDIA'S ASSISTANCE REQUIREMENTS WOULD LIKELY BE VIEWED POSITIVELY IN NEW DELHI.

1D. WITH PROPER TRAINING, SRI LANKA AIR FORCE MECHANICS WILL HAVE NO TROUBLE WHATSOEVER IN MAINTAINING THESE RADARS. AIRBORNE HISAR AND FLIR SYSTEMS ARE ALREADY IN USE IN THE SLAF AND ARE MAINTAINED TO A HIGH STANDARD. THE ARMY POSSESSES COUNTER-BATTERY RADARS THAT ARE SIMILAR IN DESIGN TO THE AIR DEFENSE RADARS BEING SOUGHT BY THE AIR FORCE. THIS MEANS THAT SOME DEGREE OF TECHNICAL EXPERTISE EXISTS IN COUNTRY AND COULD BE CROSS-LEVELLED TO THE AIR FORCE BY WAY OF ADVICE AND SUPPORT.

1E. THIS SALE SHOULD BE FINANCED WITH COUNTRY FUNDS. THIS PROCUREMENT WAS NOT INCLUDED IN THE ANNUAL DEFENSE PROCUREMENT BUDGET FOR 2005, BUT SENIOR AIR FORCE OFFICIALS HAVE VERIFIED THAT FUNDING WILL BE MADE AVAILABLE. SINCE THE SRI LANKAN PRESIDENT IS PERSONALLY CONCERNED ABOUT THE POSSIBILITY OF AN LTTE AIR ATTACK IN COLOMBO, SUFFICIENT FUNDS SHOULD BE EARMARKED FOR THE PURCHASE WITHIN THE REQUIRED TIME. THE OVERALL ECONOMIC IMPACT TO THE SRI LANKAN ECONOMY IS LIKELY NEGLIGIBLE. WHILE MONEY IS TIGHT, POST THINKS IT IS LIKELY THE FINANCE MINISTRY WOULD INSIST ON OFFSETS AND OTHER LINE ITEMS TO KEEP FISCAL DISCIPLINE. NATURALLY, FINANCING OPTIONS, SALE STRUCTURE AND NUMBER OF UNITS PURCHASED WOULD IMPACT THIS ASSESSMENT.

1F. HUMAN RIGHTS CONSIDERATIONS CONTINUE TO BE A PRIORITY FOR EMBASSY COLOMBO. THE GENERAL LEVEL OF HUMAN RIGHTS GUARANTEES IS GOOD AND IMPROVING CONTINUOUSLY IN SRI LANKA. AS THIS SYSTEM IS DEFENSIVE IN NATURE AND CAN ONLY BE USED AGAINST AN INBOUND AIRCRAFT, THIS CONSIDERATION SHOULD NOT AFFECT THE PROPOSED SALE.

1G. EMBASSY COLOMBO STRONGLY RECOMMENDS THE APPROVAL OF THIS PROPOSED SALE.

13. POC FOR THIS ACTION IS LTC RICHARD S. GIRVEN, ARMY AND DEFENSE ATTACHE, USDAO COLOMBO.

